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AN
ADDRESS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
NEW ENGLAND
Historic-Genealogical Society,
DELIVERED MARCH 1st, 1852,
BY WILLIAM JENKS, D. D., &c.,
AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

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A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN OF THE HISTORIC-GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY :

MORE than fifty years ago a retired merchant, an octogenarian New Englander, one of whose ancestors had been active and successful in resisting by force the tyrannical government of ANDROS, observed to him who addresses you this evening, "The time will come, sir, when it will be accounted an honor to have descended from the men who first settled this country." The remark was made by a gentleman of the old school, who loved to dwell on the past, and was intimately conversant with scenes and persons in Boston and its vicinage, during the deeply interesting period in which a national character was in the process of creation, as the way was preparing, in the wonderful Providence of God, for the formation and establishment of our great and prosperous Republic.

I little thought, at that time, of witnessing the institution of your respected Association. The Massachusetts Historical Society had indeed existed for some years, and I had been favored by an acquaintance, while a youth, with most of its founders, some of whom were the kind patrons of my early studies. The names of BELKNAP, ELIOT and FREEMAN were, in this view, peculiarly dear. They and their honored associates were instrumental in encouraging and diffusing a taste for historical research ; and to each of them whatever related to the lives, circumstances and influence of the civil and religious fathers of our community, was interesting. SULLIVAN, their venerated President, MINOT, their beloved fellow-laborer, are known as civil historians. And WALCOT,* with his

* This indefatigable collector of books once remarked to the author, 'I shall be satisfied if I can but carry the hod and mortar for men of learning.' His humble ambition was indeed gratified in the growth and prosperity of the Society.—[See Memoir, in Coll. VII. 3d S.]

eager desires for amassing volume on volume of the "olden time," became an efficient helper in their literary exertions.

These men, whose memory deserves so well of even their country, not to say of Massachusetts and New England only, were but successors of other workmen. WINSLOW, BRADFORD and WINTHROP—blessed be their names and their descendants!—were, happily, journalists. HEBBARD and the MATHERS drew from them, and transmitted new treasures to posterity. PRINCE perpetuated, I had almost said, the possession of these treasures,—but I check the expression: for I would not forget the Vandal desecration of the Old South meetinghouse by the myrmidons of war, 'brutish men, and skillful to destroy,' nor the ruin and partial dispersion of his precious 'New England Library.' And PRINCE was BELKNAP's respected and beloved pastor.

Nevertheless, the field of human effort among us has become so extensive, the care of cultivating its various and multiplying departments so imperative, that the great and pressing concerns of society occupy the minds of the active portions of our community. Few, comparatively, are found who give themselves leisure to look back, and cautiously examine the traces left by former years and former travellers. Some there are, however, and their number has increased greatly in the last half century: and I ask your attention, gentlemen, and that of this audience, while I endeavor to exhibit and vindicate their pursuits, as succinctly as I may: and offer a few suggestions.

The gathering of facts is all-important to human progress. Our own countryman, JEFFERSON, has well remarked,† that 'a patient collection and comparison of them is a task imposed by his Maker on every man, if he desires to obtain accurate knowledge.' Yet, it must be admitted, that the labor attending this collection for purposes of comparison, and other uses, may not bring with it, at the moment, its full advantage. Time may be needed for the development of this. Nor is it a fatality singular and uncommon. It occurs in almost all the sciences,‡ and belongs, in a good mea-

* So designated were ancient warriors by the infallible word of inspiration, Ezek. xvi. 34.

† Notes on Virginia.

‡ Thus in philology, as *Quintilian* so beautifully describes: 'Parva docemus, instituendum oratorem professi; sed est sua etiam studiis infantia; et ut corporum mox etiam fortissimorum educatio a lacte cunisque initium ducit'—'ne quis tanquam parva fastidiat grammatices elementa'—'quia interiora velut sacri hujus adeuntibus apparebit multa rerum subtilitas'—'que'—'exercere altissimam'—'eruditionem ac scientiam possit'—[*Instit. Orat. b. I. § 10, 22.*]

sure, to the nature of man and human society. One age improves and perfects, it may be, what a preceding age has but hoarded up. Foundations only are often laid — though with labor and care — and are builded upon, and, in Scriptural phrase, ‘raised up,’* by those whose privilege it is to come after.

Some, then, are but collectors, while those who succeed them have their accumulations to use. How apparent in the science, if it may be so named, of Statistics is this truth—as well as in the accumulations of pecuniary wealth to be transmitted to legal heirs. And yet how minute and laborious the gathering of the facts—how extensive the uses to which they may be applied. And I must add, that this collection of facts is far more laborious than is mere declamation. Yet the latter, plausible and enchanting though it sometimes be, is baseless without them and empty.

Now what is History but a series of facts, suitably arranged, well authenticated, and connected in the order of God’s providence? It is the illustration of His august government of the affairs of men, and their circumstances, characters, actions and fortunes. But it is evident, that the dignity and measured march of History, intent on the production and exhibition of some great result, will hardly admit the distinct specifications of its processes. This would be tedious, as it would be voluminous; and the world could scarcely retain or receive ‘the books that might be written.’†

There is, then, room provided for another course. The antiquary and the genealogist have each his province. And so has it been in the ages of antiquity and onward. ATHENÆUS and DIONYSIUS of Halycarnassus among the Greeks, VARRO, MACROBIUS and AULUS GELLIUS among the Romans, were but precursors of DU CHESNE, SPENCER, GRÆVIUS, GRONOVIVS, SPELMAN, DU FRESNE, DU CANGE, ANSELME; the Benedictines, MONTFAUCON and MABILLON, peculiarly; MURATORI, LELAND, HEARNE, ANDERSON and GOUGH among the moderns. In fact, the very record of their names would show the importance of the station they hold, and the relation they sustain to the accurate knowledge of the ordinary concerns of life. For History being the record of human affairs—and these being the affairs of individual men, who, in the aggregate, form the mass with which general history is conversant, Biography, for purposes of instruction and profit, becomes the very essence of history. And how can biography be perfected, but by attending to the minuter features of individual life? It is not to waste itself in vague generalities. It identifies men by their peculiar characteristics. It brings ‘home,’ to use lord BACON’S

* Isaiah lviii. 12.

† John, xxi, 25.

phrase, 'to men's business and bosoms' the lessons, not merely of great occasions, but also of every-day existence.

It is well worthy of remark, what an exhibition is made us in the book of books, designed for the instruction of the world, of attention to private history. How familiar are we made with the character and circumstances of ABRAHAM, and of ISAAC his son, and of JACOB and his family. And at times what scenes of deep domestic interest are set before us, as if to teach the lessons of humanity, to sanctify the scenes of the family circle, check the wanderings of a speculative fancy, and fix the mind and feelings, for personal instruction, on practical life and individual idiosyncrasies, the consequences of which we trace in the history, ultimately, of nations.

Some, too, of the most beautiful traits of ancient genins in heathen nations are seen in biographical sketches. Not to mention the Grecian PLUTARCH and DIOGENES LAERTIUS, nor the Roman NEPOS and SÆTONIUS, witness the charming exhibition of AGRICOLA in the life written by TACITUS of his honored father-in-law; the letters also of CICERO and the younger PLINY, abounding with interesting personalities,—the Greek Memorabilia of SOCRATES, and life of AGESILAUS, by the accomplished, *gentlemanly* XENOPHON, and other similar tractates.

One of your objects, Gentlemen, and a most important one, is the actual preservation of the exceedingly perishable and often really perishing original documents relating to personal family or public history, in the form of letters, diaries, or casual memoranda, of various and indescribable character. And what unavailing sympathy is not seldom excited in the antiquary's sad complaint of the—in his view—wanton destruction of old family papers! Alas, how often is the melancholy answer to his inquiries given in the astounding intelligence, that 'nobody seemed to care about them, they were lumbering up the house, and at length were carried away into the attic, became covered with dust, and lately, on clearing out the apartment for some other use, they were all burnt!' Our losses of this description, as well as those by casualties unavoidable, it would surpass the skill of any antiquary to compute.

Again, it is desirable, that, out of the necessary researches for the purpose, there should be formed a Map of our Country, or at least of New England, taking its natural features from the most recent discoveries and observations, but giving the ancient names of mountains, rivers, headlands, bays, lakes, ponds, &c.: since these are found to have often been very expressive of some natural feature or quality, and the preservation of them may aid in the philological investigations respecting our aboriginals.

If I mistake not, our indefatigable Corresponding Secretary * has already made some progress in one of this nature; and, nearly a century since, that able and devoted antiquary, Governor POWNALL, of Massachusetts, published one of North America, in which is embodied much of the information I allude to, in the location of several of the native tribes. But it is not confined to the period antecedent to European immigration. And, surely, if in the land 'of our fathers' sepulchres'† the labors of such men as HORSELEY, STUKELEY, BURTON and HENRY be prized, we too may have our successful investigators, whose vigils thus spent shall prove a light to posterity.

It is exceedingly desirable that a new and improved edition be given of the 'Magnalia CHRISTI Americana.' Grant it to be deficient; let then its deficiencies be supplied. Ample notes can be added, the history of individuals enlarged, and that of their families brought down to our own times. Such an idea is not new. The first librarian of the American Antiquarian Society‡ planned a new edition of MATHER'S great work, and went so far as to form an Index to it, which is much needed; but I am sorry to say it has not been discovered since Mr. BALDWIN'S lamented death. Yet I am happy to learn, that your present respected President§ is, shall I say?—engaged to produce it. May great success attend his labors, that, as you owe so much to the toils and sacrifices of the gentleman who first presided || over your Society, his successor may consign to your care, and that of posterity, the perfected work to which I allude.

Another work seems also to demand the notice, and intelligent and persevering research, of some one of your number; it is a reproduction of HUTCHINSON'S 'History of Massachusetts,' enriched with suitable notes, portraits of the Governors of the State, so far as procurable, and proper additions to the rich collection of the documents which already form one of his valuable volumes.

Nor can I omit to express the desire, that it may be your privilege to obtain, ultimately, a complete series of those admirable publications, as interesting as they are costly, the County Histories of England. Look at the immense piles—if your eyes may fortunately enjoy the privilege of the sight—which cannot be, I think, on this side of the Atlantic. What labor of investigation! What patience, travel, inquiry, correspondence, and arrangement of

* S. G. DRAKE, Esq., author of several valuable works on the American Indians, and Editor of some vols. of the N. E. Hist. & Gen. Register.

† Neh. ii. 3.

‡ CHRISTOPHER C. BALDWIN, Esq.

§ Rev. JOSEPH B. FELT.

|| CHARLES EWER, Esq.

gathered materials must have been expended to produce the mass!

Yet it is invaluable in its proper point of view. And much, I repeat, is it to be desired, that in some one, at least, of our numerous, but as yet inadequate libraries—inadequate to the wants of any liberal historical inquirer—there should be found a collection of them. Were this to be your happiness, Gentlemen—you, who would best know their value, and how to use them—what cause for congratulation would be the formation of your Society!

Harvard University possesses a few—some of them the noble gift of patriotic Englishmen—some the purchase of a neighboring State, * which became a patron of learning in its contribution to supply the destruction made by fire, eighty years ago, and more—but not a small portion from the funds assigned by Massachusetts herself, and the munificence of her private citizens.

Still, it is very defective, and meagre comparatively: as is the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, of our Massachusetts Historical Society, and every other with which I am acquainted. What, indeed, may have been effected in this matter by the last addition made to the princely Astor library of the city of New York, I know not—as the catalogue is yet unpublished. But most earnestly do I wish, that such may be the generosity of the patrons of literature in our country, that this acquisition may speedily be accomplished—somewhere, and somehow—but how or where is not for me to say.

Nor, perhaps, will it be inapposite here to suggest, that all which relates to the original natives and possessors of this country cannot, as I trust, but find, Gentlemen, a response in your hearts, and form acceptable items of the intelligence you seek. It is a melancholy spectacle which they exhibit in their decline, exposed as they have been to the arts and deceptions of evil-minded white men, devoid of the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers.

Their history has been too often written in violence and blood, intemperance and neglect. Yet, blessed be God! there are not a few redeeming and honorable exceptions. Gookin, and Eliot, and the Mayhews here deserve the most grateful commemoration. Nevertheless, were any of the natives capable of writing their whole history as truth requires, we must blush for the figure which many of our countrymen would exhibit.

Once more, however, permit me to revert to the New England Fathers—our ever fruitful subject of contemplation. American antiquaries may congratulate themselves, that, in ascertaining

* New Hampshire.

their origin, they are not compelled to ascend to an age of fables, as did the Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese, the Persians, and many other ancient nations. Our country received its European population in an age of intellectual light, comparatively. But that population was only an offspring of ancient families, notwithstanding. We insensibly but necessarily, therefore, slide into inquiries beyond our own shores. And where will they end, but with the proverbial length of a Welsh pedigree, or the exhaustion of almost all the 'historic-genealogical' treasures of Europe?

God's facts demand and ought ever to receive attention. Mere human declamation, if it be not connected with a careful collection, arrangement and exhibition of them, seems, as I have already said, of little worth. Now, England is, to the greater portion of our inhabitants, what Normandy was to the descendants of those who enabled its duke to conquer, for himself and his posterity, one of the fairest of kingdoms. Nor is it to be wondered at, that, if Normandy excites the curiosity of England's nobles and educated men,* England itself should excite a still deeper interest in the citizens of these States, and more especially of New England.

Now whatever concerns our venerated forefathers—the circumstances of their early lives—their religious faith and religious history—their trials, persecutions, and various sufferings and sacrifices for conscience' sake, and behavior under them—these are all fair subjects of inquiry, and interesting, as they go to form character. And certainly character needed to be formed in a peculiar mould to meet the emergency of their age. It was an age of peculiar developments, since the dawn of popular freedom appears to have commenced in it, as regards our father-land, and the popular branch of the government.

JAMES, a pedantic, self-indulgent, bigoted tyrant in feeling and principle, had succeeded ELIZABETH, whose personal prejudices were as strong, whose mental powers were stronger, and whose will was made, like that of her capricious, despotic father, the 8th HENRY, supreme law. Yet the spark of civil freedom, it is acknowledged, was struck out by the collision of puritanic zeal and knowledge with the flinty rock of prerogative and autocratic power.

Reverence and esteem are, therefore, due to the puritan fathers of New England, aside from all considerations of their relation to ourselves in kindred blood. And the better portion of the world that is civilized by principles drawn from the Sacred Scriptures—a minority indeed of those who make profession of Christianity,

* See *Wiffen's* 'House of Russell,' and the 'Peerages,' generally.

yields it now ; since much of the bigotry of former ages has been giving way to experience, common sense, philosophy and evangelism.

Since, then, in the formation of character, every element of influence is important, according to its bearing on the subject, a minute survey of contemporary history, and that in Holland as well as England—minute, since it relates to individuals of humble station, whose movements attracted no cheering crowds ; and who were the suffering party, while their oppressors were, for the time, successful and triumphant—who left their names for the scoff of the proud courtier, the scorn of the titled, lordly prelate—must be gathered, not from the glittering volume, perfumed with the incense of kingly or queenly flattery—but the obscure records of suffering and often martyred innocence.

Yes, the annals of the Reformation are defiled with blood—and out of its furnace came, like the three Jewish worthies, several of our forefathers. It is painful to read these annals—to think it possible, that man, frail, accountable man, should so torture and destroy his fellow, and, in the language of the poet, but little altered,

‘ — play such tricks before indulgent Heaven
As might make angels weep.’

Yet they must be read, and pondered, too—and their natural influence taken into the account, if we would justly appreciate the genius of the age—or of that, rather, which preceded it, and formed the actors in their times. And, certainly, without considering their age, and its scenes, its spirit, its precursors and accompaniments, our judgment of them must be exceedingly defective.

Your investigations, then, Gentlemen, take a wide and important range, a range almost illimitable. For mind acts on mind, and circumstance on circumstance, so extensively, that the origination of the motion you contemplate may be traced, perhaps, to the remotest antiquity. Our very liberties, in which we so much glory, may be deduced from the unshackled enjoyments of the wild forests of Germany, or the equally free condition and habits of British savages. The depredating pirate of Scandinavia, the freebooter of conquering Normandy, the feudal vassal of almost every European people had a share in moulding character, the character that descends to us.

Not only had the Puritans of New England learned from the Scriptures the general brotherhood of mankind, and the necessity of uniting with the service of God, and love of Him, an obedience to the wholesome laws of the State ; but to the leaders among

them the best writers of antiquity were more familiar than has been generally realized.

The distinguished author of that noble work, the 'Defense of the American Constitutions,' was not alone in deriving his knowledge of the true republican system from writers of Greece and Rome. The founders of New England freedom were before him. And the Confederation of 1643 was no faint emblem or preparation of the Federal Government itself. So true is it in human affairs that 'one soweth and another reapeth.' But without such an ancestry as ours, what would have been this country? Look at France now, and contemplate her history for the last sixty years. Look at the provinces which have cast off the yoke of Spain. These nations have not had the moral training—as we have had—of centuries. And yet, if we consult history it will appear, that noble sentiments and noble actions burst forth from their progenitors in former ages. Witness the ceremony of inauguration among the Castilians. 'We,' say the nobles to their intended sovereign, 'we, who are as good as you, constitute you our king, and will obey you while you maintain our laws—and, if you do not this, we will not obey'—or, as in the forcible conciseness of the original, 'y si no, no!' And in France there have not been wanting noble minds, formed in the finest mould of human nature, which have apprehended, exhibited, and aimed to establish the purest forms of government, and provisions and enactments of law—but the nation could not understand, or would not follow them. Who does not revere the names of the virtuous DE THOU, of PHILIP DE MORNAY, HOTOMAN, MONTESQUIEU, DE L' HOPITAL, D' AGUESSEAU, MALESHERBES, and many more of that nation so illustrious—but which yet, as the sagacious SISMONDI has remarked, with equal truth and boldness, 'in each of her revolutions committed the great mistake of placing a PRINCE at its head.' When they had achieved their freedom, they knew not how to perpetuate and use it. Nor can it be perpetuated and rendered useful, in its highest sense, without the guidance of God's truth and His effectual blessing.

'Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cause
 'Bled nobly, and their deeds, as they deserve,
 'Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
 'Their names to the sweet lyre. Th' historic muse,
 'Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
 'To latest times; and sculpture, in her turn,
 'Gives bond in stone, and ever-during brass,
 'To guard them, and immortalize her trust.
 'But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
 'To those, who, posted at the shrine of Truth,
 'Have fallen in her defense.'

‘They lived unknown,
 ‘Till persecution dragged them into fame,
 And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew—
 No marble tells us whither. With their names
 No bard embalms and sanctifies his song;
 And History, so warm on meaner themes,
 Is cold on this.’— [COWPER’S TASK, book v.]

There are, speaking generally, two operations of the understanding concerned in historical inquiries, as, indeed, in most subjects of human research. They demand, it may be, on the present occasion, a few thoughts and remarks. Analysis is one, synthesis, another. By the former, we look at a whole, and then take it asunder and inspect its parts. By the latter, we gather up the scattered parts, and combine them into a whole. It is apparent, that the latter, with respect to a history of human affairs, will involve the patient, minute industry of the antiquary; the former is more apt to occupy the historian—who exhibits the magnificent, and boundless, and ever-varying theatre of human life in a flowing, perpetuated strain. But the eye and the mind may be overtasked—and we covet a retirement from the crowd, the bustle, the public show and noise, to seek a quiet, a more leisurely survey. This is exhibited in biography, of which genealogy is necessarily a component.

History, then, has its great, its impressive scenes—and some of these are occasionally embodied by the pencil in grand historical paintings, on which we dwell, it may be, with a gratification mingled with awe. But the family-portrait, and even the miniature, recalling dear and kindred features, and thus bringing back past scenes, may have a sweeter charm. And such is the relation of biography and genealogy to history at large.

Nevertheless, the work of the historian demands an accurate knowledge and careful comparison of isolated facts. The ambitious sentences of Gibbon, who throws ridicule on heraldry, and affects to despise the obscure labors of the genealogist, were not framed, we have every reason to believe, without a toilsome, and certainly a successful examination of their treasures—treasures, which few scholars have taken greater pains than he to accumulate. The fact is, that each department is necessary to the other. And while the antiquary collects and consigns to writing and the press, his more evanescent objects of curiosity—he is actually laboring for his analytical associate: and he thus gathers, with scrupulous care, the scattered materials of a fabric, of which, though its foundations be concealed from sight, they are yet essential to the stability and even existence of what, in its just

proportions, artistic arrangements, and elaborate finish, delights all beholders.

It is thus, in fact, with all that falls under human notice. Great views exercise the faculty of comprehension, and prompt analysis. Accurate knowledge, however, must result from an acquaintance with the parts, however subdivided. 'The Infinite Mind embraces all. Nothing is too great for it to grasp; nothing is too little for it to overlook. And the Sacred Book we reverence, as the authority and guide of our faith, is written in perfect coincidence with this thought. While the interests of the universe are exhibited in its pages, the concerns of a family, the biography of an individual subject, the fall of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of the head are not passed by—illustrating so beautifully, and so consistently with the soundest philosophy, the ways and attributes of Him,

‘ Who gives its lustre to the insect’s wing,
‘ And wheels His throne upon the moving worlds.’

There are those who allow themselves to ridicule the subject of genealogy—or, if they proceed not so far, to disesteem, at least, and neglect it. Some do this in fear lest they should discover in their ancestry causes for mortification and shame; and others, ‘because,’ say they, ‘my progenitors left me nothing, and why should I remember them? Had they left me a fortune, their memory would be precious.’ Is money, then, the only valuable article on earth? Have not your ancestors left you—if phrenology be not a deception, and physical analogies a dream—the constitutional developments in which, perhaps, you glory?

It has been said, ‘the man who does not think of his ancestors will be negligent of his posterity.’ This is, probably, a true remark. And I cannot but think, that, seeing we are, as a community, so engrossed in seeking the distinction—the palpable distinction—that arises from wealth, and have, by this disposition, attracted the notice of foreigners, who ascribe to us the worship of what is significantly, though I fear profanely called, ‘the almighty dollar,’ it is of great importance to our moral character that our self-estimation should possess other elements on which to found itself—and a little of even family-pride would be better than the stigma of a ‘purse-proud aristocrat.’

Now, on this subject of mere phrenological or physical development, are there many things of more importance to the human family? The often slighted yet honest physician, whose ‘Domestic Medicine’ used to find a place in almost every considerate family, the clear-sighted, benevolent BUCHAN, dilates* on the recklessness

* In his chap. on Children, and on Diseased Parents.

of marriages designed to increase pecuniary fortunes at the expense of health both of mind and body. And I have often thought, and said to gentlemen in medical practice, that hardly could a better legacy be left by an observing physician, than a physiological description and history of the families who form the subjects of his practice.

‘My son,’ said a judicious nobleman of England, of high standing, to his heir who had now arrived at man’s estate, ‘I wish you to marry. And I wish you not to marry beneath your rank; but I have prepared lists of families of that rank, and this,’ handing him one, ‘contains the names of such as are subject to hereditary insanity—the other, those who inherit the king’s evil, or scrofula—I beg you avoid them both.’

Who is there, now, that is at all conversant with human woes arising from a feeble, broken constitution, afflicted with chronic diseases—lacerated with pain, and weary with suffering, or depressed with the anticipations of it—who would not prefer the ‘*mens sana in corpore sano*’—a sound mind in a sound body, to heaps of yellow dust!

We require pedigrees of horses—we inspect, with great care, those of cattle—to ascertain the genuineness of their descent: and the keen-sighted, experienced breeders of them acquire with the farmer, the sportsman, the independent gentleman, an almost enviable fame—but, is it not to be feared, that, in multitudes of instances, as in the old countries of Europe, the pecuniary consideration outweighs immeasurably that which is merely physiological!

The sad truth that accompanies these remarks, is found, if we may trust a shrewd observer, our countryman, THOMAS JEFFERSON, in the mental and physical conformation of most of the hereditary or legitimate crown-bearers of Europe—where, by repeated royal alliances, mental and corporal disease has become a fatal inheritance.

I pursue this subject further. The very hardships which are encountered by settlers, in such scenes as our country exhibited first to Europeans, call for energy, enforce self-denial, demand frugality and good economy, strengthen the constitution, give health and vigor to the mind, and tend to prolong life. It has even been said, that a voyage across the Atlantic adds ten years to a man’s age. How this may be I will not undertake to determine. But it is a fact, that descendents of younger branches of noble families, obliged to look out for themselves, and therefore claiming often the footless ‘martlet’ as their peculiar heraldic

designation, have been found in America, among the sons of industry, if not want. Yes, when riot and debauchery, or high, luxurious living and indolence have caused a 'noble' family to become extinct—the off-shoot, neglected and exposed, has grown to be a sightly tree. The heir of the illustrious and ancient house of DE COURCY was discovered in a hardy seaman, sailing, nearly a century ago, out of the harbor of our own Newport; and, in my own time, the legitimate owner of the immense estates of the GROSVENORS, in a poor farmer of New York. The latter never inherited. The descendant of the former now possesses the family title and estates.

There are those, I have said, who allow themselves to disparage genealogical inquiry, and the information it gives. But, whatever indifference one may experience in regard to the details of families unconnected with his own, yet hardly, I think, would the case occur, even among the most obscure in the midst of us, in which, when particulars of creditable actions or dispositions were narrated, relating to a man's father, grandfather, or remoter connection, he would not be tempted to break out in the spirit, at least, of that genuine, earnest, emphatic New England phrase, 'Do tell!' And you might 'tell' on, without fear of wearying your auditor. The feeling is natural. It belongs to our very self-hood. It is a modification, doubtless, of self-love. But how much more liberal than the boast of riches, or the oppression of power! How far more purifying and ennobling!—since he who values his descent from an ancestry distinguished for any of the virtues, inherits also, with this affection, most generally, a disposition adverse to practices of a contrary character. '*Dedecorant bene natos culpæ,*' said the Roman poet, as if he had cautioned thus: 'would you maintain the respect your predecessors have acquired, abhor every mean and dishonorable thing.' It becomes an axiom.

Then, again, as population advances, the relations of kindred seem gradually to become more and more faint. A brother is but what a cousin was in former times, when the population was sparse and its numbers few. Now whatever tends to bring men happily together, and unite them in bonds of mutual regard, has an effect to purify and advance civilization, and render society an antidote to the ruder and merely selfish propensities. This does the much-abused science of genealogy.

Our ancestors were so busied in their great enterprise—so hurried from place to place, and perplexed by new and trying circumstances, ever changing—and their minds, when enjoying any leisure, were in so many cases occupied with spiritual and heav-

only thoughts, the understanding of God's precious Word, and the great concern of 'making their calling and election sure'—that they quite neglected to detail to us their parentage, their employments in life, their marriage-alliances, and the descent of their help-mates. These matters come to us only incidentally, and in most cases, if they come at all, imperfectly. For, although but little more than two centuries have intervened since the settlement of this part of our country, there is hardly a family, even in New England, that can exhibit an entire pedigree, without a single hiatus, in all the branches of its ancestry. And this is not uttered at random. For there are not many who realize, that, if only seven generations are to be recorded, these seven embrace, of necessity, 128 individuals, and 64 alliances, at least, by marriage.

It would be a shame to us in future time, if, enjoying so much, at so great sacrifices made by our ancestors, and that so near our own times, we should not transmit to our posterity every thing of importance concerning those worthy men who preceded us, and enriched us at their own peril.

But, in the investigation of our genealogies, we are never to forget the piety of the Pilgrim Fathers—their care for their posterity, as well as their desire of religious freedom for themselves—their grief and painful foreboding of evil when they saw in Holland the Sabbath desecrated, even as in England, under the inconsistent, unendurable JAMES.

And I offer no apology, Gentlemen, nor will you expect one from me, for urging you to dwell on this part of their character. It is the leading feature of it. Without such attention our portrait would bear no resemblance. And it is our privilege, that we can, notwithstanding our 'plentiful lack' of materials in other respects desirable, accumulate enough to make this distinction palpable.

Take, for instance, the highly estimable character of the elder WINTHROP, among our Massachusetts' worthies. Take those of CARVER, BRADFORD, HAYNES, WINSLOW, EATON, BRADSTREET, and some others, and analyze them. Compare them with the requirements of God in the holy book from which they drew the rules, maxims, and motives of their lives—and, though they were not professionally devoted to the instruction of their fellow-citizens as clergymen—yet 'the sanctity of the priest,' as well as the integrity of the Christian magistrate, must be acknowledged to shine in them.

And such men, men of such stamp and metal our country and every country demands. No other is equal, properly considered, to the task and responsibility of government. And wo to our na-

tion when these enduring qualities are neglected or disesteemed—when, concerning a candidate for office, it shall not be the last of inquiries but the first, ‘is he honest, is he capable?’

Your investigations, Gentlemen, will disinter the precious gems which formed the ornaments in the crown of former worthies, and restore them to their primeval lustre. They will, I trust, display to their multiplied descendants an example the more precious, as infidelity and corruption, which God forbid! shall increase and abound among us. They will hold up to view a model for our own statesmen, which all of them, from the highest to the least influential, will do well to notice.

Our subject becomes a serious one. Nor would I have it otherwise. Serious responsibilities rest on us. We are set forth as a spectacle to the world—and not merely to the world which we behold, but to our sainted ancestry, who, for aught we can tell, are yet interested, and that most deeply, in the purity, integrity and permanent usefulness of their highly-privileged posterity.

It was a maxim with a heathen poet, that ‘the brave spring from the brave and good.’* Still, it is a question of some moment, shall we encourage family-distinctions? Is not our system of government, republican as it is, opposed to all such exclusive marks of eminence? And then comes the dreaded name of aristocracy. Aristocracy?—and what is aristocracy? Not simply family distinction, in consequence of descent. This is but one form of superiority. There is an aristocracy of office—to which a line of CLAUDIAN may apply :

‘None haughtier than the poor when raised to power,’ †—

an aristocracy of learning and talent—an aristocracy of wealth, as we have seen, acknowledged and felt by all, and eagerly sought, and even an aristocracy of gracefulness and beauty, of no less pretensions. And, notwithstanding laws and customs, these distinctions will exist. Nor do they interfere, nor need they, with the maintenance of law. Other republics have existed, and have yet cherished family distinctions. Venice, Switzerland, Geneva and Holland are modern examples. And many of our immigrants have, a long time since, and onward, brought badges of distinction with them, and indulge the harmless vanity—am I to call it?—of keeping them. The badges to which I allude are coats of arms ;

* ‘Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis.’ *Hor.*

† ‘Asperius nihil est humili quum surgit in altum.’

which have, indeed, their use, and an important use when authentic, in identifying families, and proving descents.

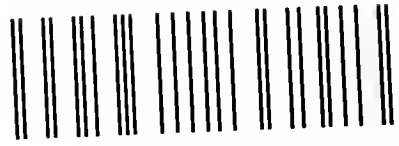
In these, our friends of New York are advanced before us already, and have a system, brief however, published and in circulation. And, if its representations are admitted, our WASHINGTON was not only of noble but royal lineage—and an admirable representative, it must be acknowledged, of regal dignity—‘one of nature’s nobles.’

But, Gentlemen, this is a question which, doubtless, you will scrutinize, for it admits of contradiction: and must be proved, if proved at all, by diligent and accurate research: MAPLESON and BURKE, and our own SPARKS, as also the distinguished herald, HEARD, and WASHINGTON himself being at variance.

If, however, on these points difficulty be apprehended, and a discordance of opinion prevail, let it be our endeavor to raise the depressed to an equality, so far as may be, with the most exalted, by the general extension of moral and literary culture, begun by the venerated fathers of New England, and transmitted to their offspring with earnest and sedulous care. Nor need this be regarded as a mere Utopian proposition. It is truly republican, and in actual process of experiment—and it is as truly Christian—although it need not extend to the vagaries of socialism. Let but labor be regarded with esteem and respect—as in fact it is by no small part of our great community: and, by its success in procuring the comforts of life, and the privileges of the social state, is still likely to become more so—then may future generations carry on the designs and efforts of the early fathers of our Commonwealth to their ultimate completion, in the establishment of a high and useful civilization, such as has not heretofore blessed mankind.



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